

53 (02/2022)



MEMORIA

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LAUNCH OF
BEHIND
'THE STAR
PROJECT'

INTERNATIONAL
COMPETITION:
"MY MEMORY.
MY RESPONSIBILITY.
AT MY PLACE."

"THE LIFE OF JEWS
FROM KOŁO YEARS
AGO" EXHIBITION
IN CHEŁMNO

ESTONIA UNVEILS
MEMORIAL FOR
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IN TALLINN

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In the morning of February 24, Russia attacked Ukraine. This act of barbarity will be judged by history, and its perpetrators, it is to be hoped, also by the International Court of Justice.

As we stand at the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial, it is impossible to remain silent while, once again, innocent people are being killed purely because of insane pseudo-imperial megalomania.

We express our absolute solidarity with the citizens and residents of the free, independent, and sovereign Ukraine and with all Russians who have the courage to oppose this war.

At this moment, the free and democratic world must show if it has learned its lesson from the passivity of the 1930s. Today, it is clear that any symptom of indifference is a sign of complicity.

LAUNCH OF BEHIND 'THE STAR PROJECT'

Commemorations such as Holocaust Memorial Day draw our attention to the existence and meaning of photographs in remembering the Holocaust. But on many occasions, we do not know the story of the persons portrayed. To be able to tell their stories, NIOD ImageLab has launched the crowdsourcing project 'Behind the Star'.

During the Second World War Jewish citizens in the Netherlands were isolated and made subject to discrimination and persecution by the National Socialists and their collaborators. The majority of them did not survive the war. More than 102,000 Jews from the Netherlands were deported and killed during the Holocaust.

Among the most compelling forms of evidence from this period that have been preserved are photographs of the victims. However, we do not always know the identity of the people portrayed in these photographs.

The NIOD project "Behind the Star" focuses on photographs in which people are depicted wearing the yellow star sewn or pinned onto their clothing. From May 1942, the wearing of a yellow fabric star – called the "Jodenster" in the Netherlands – was made compulsory by the German occupiers. This measure made it easy to identify Jewish people and was intended to stigmatize and dehumanize them.

After 1945, numerous photographs from the war years were collected in archives. BeeldbankWO2 (WWII Image

Bank) is the largest online photo archive from this period in the Netherlands and contains more than 200 images that depict people wearing yellow stars. These images reflect a fraction of the lives of those portrayed - in order to reconstruct and understand their life stories, it is essential to identify their names.

In this project the organizers aim to find the names of those portrayed, as well as to identify information that can help tell the stories of their lives.

To see the photographs and to share information, please visit: <https://beeldbankwo2.nl/en/behind-the-star>

Please help NIOD to find the names and stories behind the stars. Everyone is invited to share as much information as possible about the persons depicted in these photographs. This includes their names, as well as other information, such as dates and locations where these photos were made. All information is welcome, even if it is not possible to gather all the data at once.



INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION: "MY MEMORY. MY RESPONSIBILITY. AT MY PLACE."

The Auschwitz Memorial, in co-operation with the Auschwitz-Birkenau Institute, announces an international competition entitled: "My memory. My responsibility. At my place". We will accept entries until 21 March.

'In the face of growing intolerance, antisemitism, xenophobia and other attitudes of hatred, we want to use the competition to encourage young people, communities, activists, educators, historians and all those who are receptive to action, to engage in activities, particularly at the local level. We feel obliged to shape in people, especially in the young generations, conscious, socially sensitive, involved and responsible attitudes,' said the President of the Institute, Maria Ossolińska.

The competition's goal is to find the most interesting projects which, by referring to the history of the German Nazi concentration and extermination camp Auschwitz, draw attention to issues of our contemporary responsibility for the world, especially in the local dimension.

'Our idea is to show that the memory of Auschwitz can serve to build responsibility and make people sensitive to injustice and human suffering. We must promote and



strengthen civic attitudes and democratic values, which are one of the tools of counteracting hatred and indifference,' added Ossolińska.

Submitted works should include a description of actions already taken or a project idea. The jury's evaluation criteria will include reference to the title of the competition, innovativeness of the idea/project, its feasibility, and coherence and clarity of the presentation.

The languages accepted are English, German, French, Hebrew, Spanish, Russian, Polish and Italian, and the volume of the text must not exceed 6,000 characters with spaces. Please send entries by email to [dosomething\[at\]auschwitz.org](mailto:dosomething[at]auschwitz.org) by 21 March 2022.

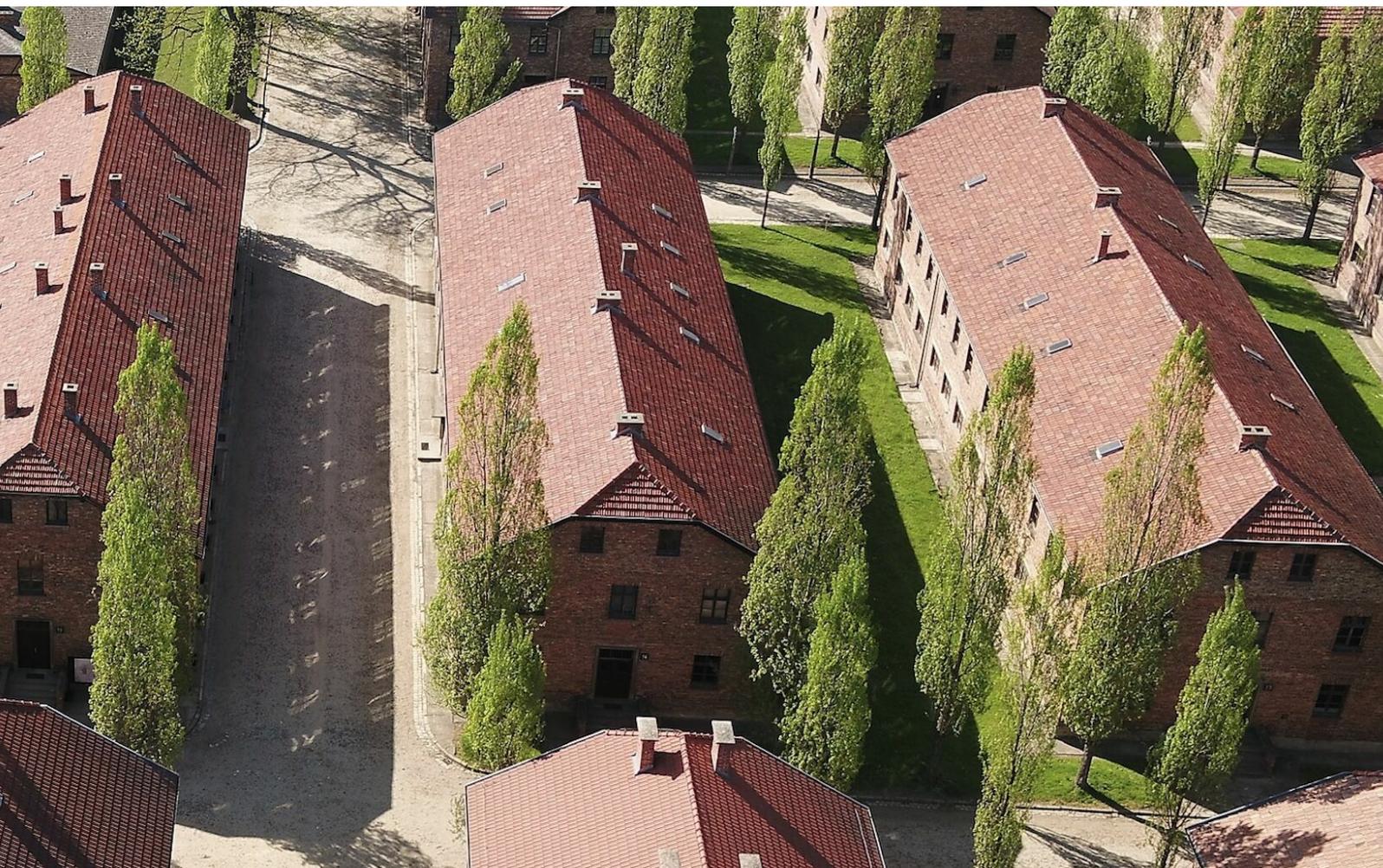
The winning entries will be published at the auschwitz.org website. The winners will take part in educational workshops organised at the Memorial and have the opportunity to present their project in the form of a

recording during a conference organised in early July in connection with the 75th anniversary of the Museum's establishment.

The Auschwitz-Birkenau Institute undertakes international cooperation and offers numerous cultural, social and educational projects in close partnership with the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. The Institute aims to build and constantly expand the network of people involved in the activities of diplomacy of remembrance at the Auschwitz Memorial and reach out to those who have never visited the Memorial.

The Institute undertakes these activities in cooperation with institutions dealing with the subject of the Holocaust in the world, educational and cultural institutions, associations, and people committed to these issues.

Competition regulations



RITCHIE BOYS WILL RECEIVE THE ELIE WIESEL AWARD

Secret Unit Formed 80 Years Ago Was Instrumental in Nazi Germany's Defeat and Included Many Who Had Fled the Regime

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum will confer its highest honor, the Elie Wiesel Award, on the Ritchie Boys, a little-known special World War II US military intelligence unit that included many Jewish refugees from Nazism and was instrumental to the Allied victory. The award will be presented this spring.

"The Ritchie Boys were one of World War II's greatest secret weapons for US Army intelligence," said incoming Museum Chairman Stuart E. Eizenstat. "Many had fled Nazi Germany but returned as American soldiers, deploying their knowledge of German language and culture to great advantage. They significantly helped the war effort and saved lives. We are honored to recognize the unique role they played serving the United States and advancing our victory over Germany."

Outgoing Museum Chairman Howard M. Lorber added, "We selected the Ritchie Boys because of their remarkable actions and heroism in helping to end the war and the Holocaust. This little-known part of American history deserves national acknowledgement. Our country owes them an enormous debt of gratitude for their courage and sacrifices. What could be more appropriate than to honor them with an award bearing the name of Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel."

Facing significant intelligence deficiencies, in April 1942, the US Army activated a plan to convert Fort Ritchie, a Maryland National Guard Camp, into an intelligence training center. Approximately 20,000 men—many of whom were immigrants and refugees from more than 70 countries, including 2,800 German and Austrian refugees who fled Nazi persecution and had arrived in the United States as "enemy

aliens"—were trained there. They became known as the "Ritchie Boys." Their enormous contributions to defeating Nazism—one Army study concluded they were responsible for obtaining nearly 60 percent of the actionable intelligence gathered in Europe during the war—and their postwar justice efforts remain little known to Americans even today.

After their training, the Ritchie Boys were dispersed in different Army units. Many landed on the beaches of Normandy soon after D-Day. From that point on, Ritchie Boys were involved in every major battle in Europe, using their language skills to gather intelligence, interpret enemy documents, and engage in psychological warfare encouraging German soldiers to surrender by dropping leaflets, through radio broadcasts, and in trucks equipped with loudspeakers. Hundreds of Ritchie Boys were attached to divisions that liberated concentration camps and interviewed former prisoners to document the atrocities that took place. Jewish soldiers were in great danger if captured, and two were captured and executed due to being identified by their captors as German-born Jews. After the war, a number served as translators and interrogators—especially during the Nuremberg Trials.

In August 2021, the bipartisan US Senate Resolution 349 officially recognized the bravery of those troops. About 200 Ritchie Boys are



bravery of those troops. About 200 Ritchie Boys are estimated to be alive today.

About the Elie Wiesel Award

Established in 2011, the Elie Wiesel Award recognizes individuals whose actions embody the Museum's vision of a world where people confront hate, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity. Elie Wiesel, the Museum's founding chairman, was the first recipient of the award, which was subsequently named in his honor. Engraved on the award are the words from Wiesel's Nobel Prize acceptance speech, "One person of integrity can make a difference."

About the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

A nonpartisan, federal educational institution, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America's national memorial to the victims of the Holocaust dedicated to ensuring the permanence of Holocaust memory, understanding, and relevance. Through the power of Holocaust history, the Museum challenges leaders and individuals worldwide to think critically about their role in society and to confront antisemitism and other forms of hate, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity. For more information, visit ushmm.org.

“THERE ARE NO MORE JEWS, SINCERE, SIMPLE PEOPLE” EXHIBITION

The Museum in Chełmno presents the new temporary exhibition entitled The life of Jews from Koło years ago... that commemorates the first victims of the Nazi extermination camp in Chełmno (German Kulmhof) – the Jews from Koło.

On December 7th 1941 in the morning, lorries came to pick up the first group of Jews from Koło (after two days of detainment in the cheder and beth midrash). 50 persons were loaded on each of them respectively. They were informed that they were heading towards Chełmno (the rallying point) and then further “to the east”. Instructions were given to the drivers in a loud voice to drive carefully, especially if the ill were transported inside the vehicle. Soon after, the lorries would come back empty to pick up the next group from the list.

After a night spent in the palace, the Jews were ordered to take off their clothes and go to the narrow basement corridor. The palace (the relics of which were preserved) takes up a special place in the history of SS-Sonderkommando Kulmhof. The victims would spend their last moments of their life before death in mobile gas chambers. Located next to the exit from the basement, their interiors used to imitate bathhouses.

On December 11th, the last transport left Koło. Lajwe Wołkowicz notified the nearby Judenrat in Dąbie about the beginning of deportations: “I took a risk and left. Passing through Chełmno, I noticed a large number of SA officers and gendarmes. [...]

I haven’t noticed any more Jews in the streets in Koło”.

In total about 3 thousand Jews from the city perished in the camp, “simple and sincere men”, as described by Henschel Hirschbein in *Sefer Kolo* (1958). Next victims transported to Chełmno in December 1941 were the Jews from Dąbie in the Koło county as well as Jews from cities and towns of the Turek county, concentrated in so called countryside ghetto Czachulec–Kowale Pańskie.

In the years 1937–1939, ca. 4560 Jews lived in the city of Koło, which constituted about 35% of all citizens. The memory of Jewish community within modern urban space is evoked by the damaged cemetery or the monument located in the centre of the New Market Square, where the synagogue complex used to be situated. An important aspect while preparing the scenario of the exhibition consisted in collecting and appropriately selecting the sources depicting rich heritage of the Jews from Koło.

The exhibition was prepared with the 80th anniversary of their Shoah in mind. It is the first exposition forming part of the post-war tradition of “writing” that documents the history of the Jews from Koło and promotes the knowledge of those events.

The inauguration of the new museum exhibition accompanied the ceremony commemorating the first camp victims and the beginning of mass extermination of Jewish people within the territory of the so called Wartheland.

The exhibition crowns the year of research efforts, including numerous queries and searches of the families of Holocaust Survivors. On this occasion, their descendants shared their private archives, providing such unique materials as the photographs of Abraham Stupaj, owner of the photography atelier at Sienkiewicza Avenue in Koło, or the poems by Tola Moskal Kopyto, former prisoner of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp.

The exhibition consists of two parts. The first one is formed by exposition pylons situated within former camp premises in Chełmno, where the history of the Jews from Koło is

presented following the chronological order, starting from German troops entering the city, the persecution of Jews, through forced displacements, incarceration in the ghetto and the Shoah. The second component is presented in the hall of the Museum historical service pavilion and it is dedicated to the life before the Shoah. Here, lithographs by Harry Daniels (Herszel Danielewicz) from the collections of Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw take the floor. The artist, citizen of Koło, is famous for his cycle of works devoted to the "old life" with clear city-related reminiscences. The narration is complemented with small objects – artifacts presented in showcases.

Why has everything already become silent? After the war, Michał Podchlebnik, eyewitness of the displacement action of the Jews from Koło, who had escaped the Chełmno camp, found himself among those who came back to the city. In 1946, up to 35 Jews lived in Koło,

but the community did not manage to restore Jewish urban lifestyle, and there were no active institutions or a synagogue. In the years that followed, due to difficult political moods in the country, the Jews from Koło would emigrate, like Podchlebnik, to Israel, Western Europe, USA or Canada.

Today, the Compatriotic Association of the Jews from Koło is active in Israel, led by Izzy Israel Keren (Kutner). The photo included within the exhibition and presenting a man taking a stroll on the promenade in Koło wearing a dark suit, lacquered boots and a stylish hat brings the memory of his father, Yeshayahu Szaji, and thousands of Jews that perished.

* Museum of the former German Kulmhof Extermination Camp in Chełmno nad Nerem, Department of the Martyrdom Museum in Żabikowo



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ESTONIA UNVEILS MEMORIAL FOR HOLOCAUST VICTIMS IN TALLINN

On 27 January 2022 a memorial was unveiled at the Liiva Cemetery in Tallinn in memory of Estonian Jews who were murdered in an anti-tank trench in the city and nearby in 1941. 300 to 600 Estonian Jews are buried in mass graves at the Liiva Cemetery.

At the national commemoration ceremony for the victims of the Holocaust which took place at the site of the memorial, Minister of Education and Research Liina Kersna said that it is the duty of adults to tell schoolchildren about the Holocaust in order to prevent such crimes against humanity in the future.

"For today's young people, these events decades ago may seem distant. It is our duty as adults to tell schoolchildren about the Holocaust and explain what led to such events in human history. This is one way of preventing the recurrence of such acts of horror in the future," said minister Kersna.

This year, the Ministry of Education and Research, together with the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory organized a winter school where students have the opportunity to learn about antisemitism and the Holocaust as a crime against humanity, as well as about the Jews as a nation, their culture, customs and history.

Minister Kersna added that standing at the memorial to the victims of the tragic crime against humanity on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we recall our duty to oppose any attempt to deny the Holocaust or to justify any crime against humanity: "There are many tragic events in human history that we can remember in retrospect as very painful

lessons. We must never forget these lessons."

The President of the Republic of Estonia Alar Karis, the Minister of Education and Research Liina Kersna, the Head of the Diplomatic Corps and the Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia to Estonia H.E Mr Raimonds Jansons and the Chairwoman of the Estonian Jewish Community Alla Jakobson spoke at the commemoration ceremony. The Israeli Ambassador to Estonia H.E. Ms Hagit Ben-Yaakov sent a written address. The final blessings were given by the Estonian Chief Rabbi Smuel Kot.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day has been celebrated in Estonia since 2003. The commemorative events that mark the 77th year since the liberation of the Auschwitz- Birkenau concentration camp was organized by the Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia together with the Jewish Community of Estonia, the Estonian delegation to the the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory. Since 2007, Estonia has been a member of the IHRA which unites governments and experts to strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, research and remembrance worldwide and to uphold the commitments of the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust.





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PUBLISHER

Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum

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